

LISTING OF CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in this application.

1-16. (Cancelled)

17. (Currently Amended) A suspension joint for a vehicle comprising:

a ball joint stud having a convex semi-spherical stud head;

a housing for receiving [a] said stud head for articulated movement therein, said housing having a central bore;

a bearing insert defining a central axis and disposed between said housing and said stud head for establishing a durable sliding interface therebetween; said bearing insert having a bearing body nested in said central bore and a concave semi-spherical inner surface for directly engaging said stud head, said bearing insert including at least three radial slots disposed therein and a discontinuity;

said bearing insert including a discontinuity extending generally radially through said bearing body and axially along the entire length of said bearing insert; and

said bearing insert further including at least three radial slots extending radially outwardly from said inner surface to a termination point embedded within said bearing body, [[wherein]] each of said radial slots [[has]] having a distinct radial depth as measured from said central axis to said termination point, such that no more than two of said radial slots have an identical radial depth.

~~wherein no more than two of said at least three radial slots have an identical radial depth.~~

18. **(Currently Amended)** The suspension joint of Claim 17 wherein said ~~[[bearing insert includes]]~~ at least three radial slots consists of exactly five radial slots, a first one of said five radial slots disposed ~~[[axially]]~~ radially opposite from said discontinuity, and the remaining four of said five radial slots arcuately spaced 60° from at least one adjacent said radial slot ~~two pairs of axially opposed radial slots each equidistantly spaced between said first radial slot and said discontinuity.~~

19. **(Currently Amended)** The suspension joint of Claim 18 wherein said first one of said five radial ~~[[slot]]~~ slots has a first radial depth ~~[[less]]~~ that is shorter than ~~[[a]]~~ the radial depth of each of said ~~[[two pairs of axially opposed]]~~ remaining four of said five radial slots.

20. **(Currently Amended)** The suspension joint of Claim 18 wherein ~~[[a second]]~~ each of said radial ~~[[slot]]~~ slots proximate said first one of said five radial slots ~~in each of said two pairs of axially opposed radial slots~~ has a radial depth ~~[[less]]~~ that is shorter than ~~[[a]]~~ the radial depth of ~~a third radial slot in each of said two pairs of axially opposed radial slots~~ each of said radial slots proximate said discontinuity.

21. **(Cancelled)**

22. **(Cancelled)**

23. **(Original)** The suspension joint of Claim 17 wherein said bearing is secured in said housing against radial movement.

24. (Original) The suspension joint of Claim 17 wherein said bearing is secured in said housing against rotational movement.

25. (Original) The suspension joint of Claim 17 wherein said bearing is movable in an axial direction within said housing.

26. (Currently Amended) The suspension joint of Claim 17 wherein said ~~[[bearing insert includes]]~~ at least three radial slots consists of exactly six radial slots.

27. (Currently Amended) The suspension joint of Claim 26 wherein said six radial slots are arranged in three pairs consisting of two slots each, a first pair of said six radial slots ~~[[has a]]~~ each having an equivalent first radial depth, a second pair of said six radial slots ~~[[has a]]~~ each having an equivalent second radial depth that is different than said first radial depth, and a third pair of said six radial slots ~~[[has a]]~~ each having an equivalent third radial depth that is different than said first and second radial depths.

28. (Currently Amended) The suspension joint of Claim 27 wherein said first radial depth is ~~[[less]]~~ shorter than said second radial depth; and wherein said second radial depth is ~~[[less]]~~ shorter than said third radial depth.

29. (Currently Amended) The suspension joint of Claim 26 wherein an imaginary axial plane passing through said central axis and said discontinuity bisects said bearing insert ~~[[is bisected]]~~ into first and second mirror image portions ~~[[by an axial plane]]~~; and wherein said six radial slots ~~[[define]]~~ are arranged in three pairs of two identical radial slots each, one of each pair of said two identical radial slots ~~[[bisected by said axial plane]]~~ disposed in said first mirror image portion and the other of each pair of said two identical radial slots disposed in said second mirror image portion.

30. (New) The suspension joint of Claim 17 wherein said radial slots are symmetrically disposed relative to one another about said central axis of said bearing insert.

31. (New) The suspension joint of Claim 17 wherein said bearing body has a generally annular exterior configuration, and wherein an imaginary axial plane passing through said central axis and said discontinuity bisects said annular bearing body into first and second mirror image portions.

32. (New) The suspension joint of Claim 17 wherein one of said at least three radial slots located proximate said discontinuity has a radial depth that is longer than the radial depth of another one of said at least three radial slots located distal from said discontinuity.

33. (New) The suspension joint of Claim 17 wherein each of said at least three radial slots includes an enlarged end portion adjacent said termination point and a reduced-width neck portion extending between said enlarged end portion and said inner surface, said reduced-width neck portion having a width less than a width of said enlarged end portion.

34. (New) The suspension joint of Claim 33 wherein each of said enlarged end portions has a circular cross section.

35. (New) The suspension joint of Claim 34 wherein each of said enlarged end portions is dimensionally identical to the other of said enlarged end portions.